Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0228FL-1 for School District of Manatee County, FL

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a well-defined vision that is comprehensive, coherent, and supports increased equity which builds on the four core educational assurance areas consistent with the Race to the Top-District Absolute Priority. This vision consists of having students build a solid academic and social foundation that will prepare them for life-long learning. The proposed STEM- Fully Integrated Reading, Science, and Technology (STEM FIRST) program includes strategies that will transform the curriculum and implements promising and proven approaches that are likely to support improve student academic achievement. For example, the applicant will introduce STEM FIRST engineering labs in each of the 41 participating elementary schools while simultaneously providing teacher professional development and appropriate curriculum at all pre-K - 5 school sites. The applicant proposes to partner with a local university to prepare teachers to deliver new instructional strategies.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**2**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a sound approach for selecting schools to participate in this proposed project. They explain that there are many similar programs in middle and high school, but few exist in the elementary grades. They are proposing to serve 41 pre-K - 5 schools in order to help students gain knowledge and critical skills. The table (A)(2) indicates that there are 22,360 participating students. The target population consists of 13,988 low-income students. This comprises 62.56% of the participating population. 20,510 are high-need students, and there are 1,242 participating educators.

Weaknesses:

It is unclear how many students the applicant will serve at the start of the grant. The applicant reports serving 41 schools totaling 22,360 students. However, the graphic included in section (A)(2)(a) shows that the applicant plans to phase in the number of schools and participating teachers over a four-year period.

- Phase one: 13 schools, 393 teachers
- Phase two: 14 schools, 424 teachers
- Phase three: 14 schools, 424 teachers
- Phase four: 41 schools, 1,242 teachers

This seems to indicate that they will not, in fact, serve the 22,360 participating students at the start of the grant. Additionally, it is not clear if the number of schools in the phased-in plan uses a cumulative count of schools over the grant, or a count at the time of the start of the grant. Because they do not identify the schools in each phase, it is impossible to know the number of participating students, participating students from low-income families, or high-need students at the start of the grant.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides some components of a high-quality plan: goals, activities, deliverables, and a timeline. For example: they propose to implement a personalized learning environment for the 41 participating schools with the STEM FIRST program by 2016. The district's theory of action includes an initial reform strategy that builds content knowledge of teachers and school leadership using best practices in instruction delivery. The district will build capacity to support district -wide change by training teachers to deliver rigorous and relevant instruction. They plan to disseminate best practices for duplication and national replication of the grant project using strategies such as Moodle (Course Management Systems) that gives teachers an opportunity to share lesson plans along with rubrics and student examples of achievement. The proposed theory of change seems like an appropriate approach to improving student outcomes.

Weakness:

The applicant does not clearly address how it will scale up the grant project to support district-wide reform beyond the participating schools. For example, the proposal will serve all elementary schools, but it does not describe how it would expand these reforms to its middle and high schools. Additionally, the plan does not include a clear rationale or identify responsible parties for executing the work. There is also concern that the applicant is not including the required number of students at the start of the grant in 2012-2013.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes ambitious and yet achievable annual goals. The applicant proposes using student outcome data based on state math and reading assessments. Each school year from 2012-13 through 2016-2017 the target rate of overall student proficiency in reading is set to increase by 4%. The Math proficiency baseline for all students is 52% to increase up to 75% in 2016-2017, with annual increases of 5% and 4%.

The applicant describes decreasing achievement gaps in reading by 90% by 2015-2016. The application narrative explains that it plans to have 95% proficiency in reading and Math for all students and subgroups by 2016-2017. The methodology and figures provided in table (A)(4)(b) are not clearly explained. They set ambitious goals for student achievement, but it is not clear that these goals will decrease the gaps between subgroups.

The graduation baseline rate is 72% for 2011-2012. The graduate rates goals will increase by 2% - 6%, depending on the subgroup, by 2016 – 2017, which is ambitious and achievable.

The applicant did not include overall college enrollment baseline data or goals. College enrollment baseline rates in 2009-2010 for subgroups ranged from 36.89% to 78%. The college enrollment goals for each subgroup seem ambitious and achievable.

Overall the applicant proposes ambitious yet achievable goals, however it is not clear how the district will reduce achievement gaps between subgroups and data for all student college enrollment is not provided.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	**15**	**13**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a clear record of success from 2002 through 2011. The students involved in the two elementary STEM-based education programs increased their scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test compared to traditional students who did not have the same opportunity. The number of AP Exams taken by minorities increased from 46 in 2002 to 175 by 2011. Grade levels 3 – 5 students in STEM Learning Schools increased 10% or more proficiency, compared to Non-STEM Schools in mathematics, science, English language arts, and technology. For example, the fifth grade STEM FIRST students showed a significant gain in science of 55% proficient score compared to 39% proficient score for students enrolled in traditional schools. The district has been successful in increasing graduation rates for African American and Hispanic males' students with the exception of 2010-11. The applicant uses a comprehensive MTSS (Multi-tiered Systems of Support) that allows all teachers, students, and parents to have easy access to a variety of student data, such academic progress, progress reports, and report cards.

WEAKNESSES:

The applicant does not clearly identify which schools are the lowest performing. Therefore, it is difficult to fully assess if this proposal will achieve ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools as required by the Race to the Top-District grant.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant states that it provides a prominent link, labeled “Transparency,” on its website for the public to review district- and school-level salary and expenditure data for each of the required categories. This method and evidence provided demonstrates that the applicant fully meets the requirements of this sub-criterion.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant shows a well-defined strategy for how the program will implement personalized learning in a successful environment and sufficient autonomy. The district has appropriate conditions in place including: the district owns it own school sites, elected board members lead the school district, the superintendent manages the day-to-day operations, the district has the ability to collect and manage data, and the leadership management team train to be involve in the whole-school transformation of the STEM FIRST program. The district is recipient of Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States. A monitoring plan to keep all activities on target for success. The results of implementing a personalized learning model will lead to the commitment in the replication of the curriculum district wide.

The district has maintain high-quality data collection and management system including conisitent, accurate and expedient reporting processes. There is an impressive leadership management team to oversee implementation of its proposed proposal. Comprehensive information about the qualifications of individual team members is provided. A coordinating council comprised of a broad cross section of prefessional educators, teacher representatives, parents, student representatives, business leaders and other qualified persons to assist in project implementation. Based on satisfactory evidence of the applicant successful conditions and reasonable sufficient autonomy from the state to function as a school district this critrion has fulfill the requirements to implement a personal;ized learning environment.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates that it engaged in extensive stakeholder engagement working meetings throughout the development of the proposal. These efforts resulted in 99% of the district’s elementary schools and charter schools participating in the grant application over time. There are 41 letters of support from teachers, students, parents, and 16 additional letters of support from the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civil and community-based organizations, and institutions of higher education. The application was signed by the union president. The letters of intent submitted by the union and teachers illustrate strong support for the proposal.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	**5**	**2**

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

It is notable that prior to the application, the district conducted a review of current achievement data followed by a gap analysis that focused on elements of student success common to higher performing elementary schools. One finding was gains by elementary students, “especially by gender,” in schools that had implemented STEM labs over more than a two year period. These findings were used in the development of the applicant's proposal which focus on the creation of personalized learning environments through the implementation of elementary school STEM engineering labs.

Weakness:

The proposal does not clearly identify activities, timelines, deliverables, or the parties responsible for executing a plan to analyze its current status in implementing personalized learning environments. Nor does it clearly articulate how it will identify needs and gaps that the plan will address.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	**20**	**16**

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a well-defined plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in participating elementary schools. The STEM FIRST engineering labs are blended learning classrooms where students will engage in in-person and online learning activities. Through the proposed activities students will be able to engage in real-world experiences and set goals and track their own progress. The approach consists of inquiry-based learning where students will have hands-on experiences in elementary STEM engineering labs. The STEM engineering labs will provide opportunities for collaborative project-based learning. Students in grades pre-K - 5 will have the opportunity to be involved in a rigorous curriculum that is grounded in the Common Core State Standards and the Standards for Technological Literacy and linked to 21st century skills.

Each STEM engineering labs will be equipped with multi-media libraries that are seen as fundamental to personalized learning. These libraries provide multiple kinds of unique learning experiences. Students will be able to use many different learning modalities to design, conceptualize, collaborate, explore, and develop 21st century skills.

In addition, the district's vision for its elementary school engineering labs includes student immersion in a school culture centered on real-world problem-solving, which will facilitate student-driven work and increase student interest in academics and careers. The STEM engineering labs will house a large variety of high-tech equipment that will allow students to design, prototype, test, build, and create as they think of solutions to everyday problems in robotics, manufacturing, transportation, energy, and other related topics. An effective instruction rubric was described for the STEM FIRST project, which is used to monitor and document students learning goals. Teachers and students will be able to monitor progress towards goals and determine the next course.

The applicant states that a full range of accommodations for exceptional and/or high needs students will be available through the labs. They also note that the accommodations are in full compliance with IDEA guidelines and IEP review schedules.

The applicant has a support system in place for all students and parents to understand, manage, and track individualized learning. Students and parents will have accessibility to tools and other resources, which is essential for implementing personalized learning goals.

Weaknesses

The applicant does not clearly articulate how students will be trained to effectively use the STEM FIRST labs.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a basic plan to improve learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment. The plan includes instructional strategies to enable students to pursue a rigorous course of study that is aligned to college- and career-ready standards and graduation requirements which accelerate their learning through support of their individual needs.

The district has committed to reform its Teaching and Learning Division. This will directly impact the likelihood of students' success in implementing the personalized learning environment for students and teachers. The applicant is committed to implementing a professional teaching and learning cycle of activities in which teachers plan collaboratively. This includes newly designed lessons aligned with local, state, and national standards, along with the Common Core State Standards initiative. The district will utilize newly developed curricula to introduce next generation science and engineering practices that are appropriate to each grade level, pre-K-5. The district proposes to create a professional learning initiative to support teachers in implementing the new curriculum and instructional practices. The professional teaching and learning cycle is comprised of six steps – study, select, plan, implement, analyze and adjust – and uses data-driven activities to track student progress toward meeting individualized identified learning goals.

WEAKNESSES:

The applicant lacks evidence to demonstrate how it will use teacher evaluation data to assess and improve individual educator practice. There was not a clear plan to increase the number of students receiving instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	**15**	**15**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This applicant details policies, practices, rules, and infrastructure which define roles and responsibilities, the make-up of the District, board members, superintendent, ratio of teachers to students and staff to parents, and the community. STEM FIRST builds a culture of flexibility and autonomy for instructional and support staff that is in line with school-based management principles. Funds are budgeted for professional learning for every teaching position connected to the students of grades PK-5. Each of the 41 schools in this district receives full authority, flexibility, and autonomy to execute the activities in the grant. The engineering labs provide the opportunity for students to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery. Students and teachers are able to track their progress in real-time.

The district functions within the guidelines and administrative rules and regulations provided by Florida statutes and has a five-member publicly-elected board for four-year terms. The superintendent provides leadership for the day-to-day operations within the district. An executive team provides assistance and support for all students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community entities. This proposed approach will ensure student achievement in the classroom. The Professional Learning Division makes sure blended learning is taking place district-wide. The applicant plans to hire a project director to manage Race to the Top-District funding and activities.

The district provides an adaptable and accessible plan to ensure continuous equal access and full inclusion of all students relative to the full range of personalized learning experiences and opportunities in this project. The district is in full compliance with IDEA and Title I. One example is that full accommodations will be made for students with disabilities and English language learners.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a plan for the District schools infrastructure to support personalized learning for all participants in this project. The plan consists of preparing the district to become leader in a digital world, ensure interoperability of communication, personalized training, communication between school and home, provide family support through school websites, teacher websites, classroom blogs, and Wikis. For example, the technical support will be accessible to all participants for afterschool component, parent nights, competitions/events, and summer programs. Florida Information Resources Network is the district interoperable data systems for statewide communication. Mobile devices and iPads serving the district office for collection of student data. This method ensures that interoperability of hardware and software should interact with the local system to enhance implementing a STEM FIRST program.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**13**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides a rigorous continuous improvement process to continue the improvement of the STEM FIRST Learning Program. This plan consists of providing regular feedback on progress through formative and summative data collecting. The applicant plans to collect quarterly data using school visitations, surveys, and a district data management system. This strategy will ensure data collection tasks are accomplished according to schedule.

WEAKNESSES:

The applicant lacks information on how the program will publicly share information about the progress of the grant. This is a key component of the sub-criterion and results in a deduction of points.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a well-defined plan for ongoing communication and engagement for the STEM FIRST Program. The strategies include: an Electronic Bulletin Board, teleconferences among schools, use of GoToMeeting and Skype software, FIRST Note publication, calendar, benchmarks, district website, school websites, newsletters, ConnectEd calls, flyer campaigns, and parent nights. Formative and summative assessment data will be used to monitor the success of the implementation of the project's goals.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides achievable performance measures that are ambitious for overall and by sub-group. These performance measures are presented in a comprehensive chart reflecting the most reliable and consistent data source available from the district personnel. Each performance measure is calculated by increasing student achievement in grades 3, 4, and 5 based on reading and math assessments. Other performance measures consist of the K-2 Mathematics Benchmark, Grades 3-5 FCAT 2.0, and a K-5 Social-emotional leading indicator. The district will also assess progress by comparing current baseline data to student academic progress in STEM FIRST Program.

Weakness:

The applicant does not provide clear rationale for each performance measure. Therefore it is difficult to fully assess the reason for choosing each measure.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant proposes a thoughtful plan to evaluate the effectiveness of grant funded activities. A qualified independent evaluation team will collect and report data as a part of the applicant's plan to ensure transparency. The independent evaluator will communicate progress data to all appropriate parties on a quarterly basis. Data will be collected on teachers, students, parents, administrators, and external business and community agency partners. This proposed approach will keep all stakeholders and interested parties informed of the progress of the project in STEM FIRST activities at the school and district level.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	**10**	**6**

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant describes a well-defined budget based on factors such as the needs of the participating students and teachers, grant administration, resources, and facilities. The program describes the allocations requested for the duration of the project. The budget is supportive of the applicant's plan and identifies all funds that will support the project. The budget narrative provides comprehensive details for each line item required by federal regulation such as personnel, fringe benefits, travel for staff, and other to support the activities of the participants in the Race to the Top-District Program. The budget tables also identify ongoing versus one-time costs. The applicant requests $28,722,818.49 to serve 22,360 participating students in grades Pre-Kindergarten – 5.

Weaknesses:

Given the question raised in (A)(2), it is unclear if the applicant will actually serve the full 22,360 students at the start of the grant. Therefore it is difficult to assess if the request is within the appropriate budget range.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The district anticipates that funding committed from other state and local sources to support the proposal will be continued beyond the terms of the grant. Additionally, the district has committed a minimum of $750,000 of district funds per year over a three-year period after the grant period has ended to sustain activities implemented during the grant cycle. The applicant provides goals, activities, deliverables, and a timeline. Overall, the evidence submitted demonstrates a high-quality sustainability plan.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**10**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provides an ambitious plan to use existing partners to create a support network for high-risk families and children. The program will work closely with the public resources and private community organizations to provide supports for these students and families. The proposal details a four-pronged effort:

1. A referral system to community partner services
2. STEM Days to build awareness in the importance of STEM
3. Elementary school level career and technical opportunities awareness
4. College and career STEM experiences

The applicant provides 16 support letters from community organizations demonstrating their support of STEM FIRST Program. The partnerships will help connect high-need families with local organizations to enhance the student through tutoring, mentoring, leadership development, educational experiences, and outreach to social-emotional and behavioral agencies. The applicant identifies population-level desired results addressing both educational and other education outcomes. They plan to track demographic data and review all data collected from the STEM FIRST program and from a community outreach initiative to improve results for participating students. They also plan to use this data to link agencies that specialize in these high-need student populations. The applicant plans to build capacity of staff in participating schools by providing them with supports to assess the needs and assets of students and ensure that the partnership aligns with the educational goal of increasing STEM education delivery through personalized learning environments. The STEM FIRST Community Council and the program evaluator will create a decision-making process and infrastructure to select and implement supports as well as asses the district's progress. The proposal includes performance measures that seem to be ambitious yet achievable and appropriate for the population and partnerships proposed.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	**Met/Not Met**	**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates evidence of meeting Absolute Priority 1 throughout the proposal. The personalized learning environment proposed strengthens the district's efforts in addressing most of the core educational assurance areas. One area of weakness is the district's goals to reduce the achievement gap. The applicant sufficiently meets the selection criteria. The proposal details a plan to implement blended learning through the STEM FIRST program.

Total	**210**	**173**

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0228FL-2 for School District of Manatee County, FL

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County, Florida, has proposed a comprehensive and coherent plan to transform the curriculum, instruction, and practices in all district elementary schools and district owned charter schools through the implementation of an early STEM education and includes a STEM FIRST elementary lab at each school site. The district will redesign the curriculum to align with the rigorous Common Core Standards initiative and guide the STEM FIRST program. Professional development will be extensive and on-going using a system of continuous and cycled training that encourages the involvement of effective teachers and administrators in support of struggling schools that need improvement. The proposal includes a cohesive plan that enhances student, parent, and teacher growth and motivation to gain success in academics and provide a solid foundation and direction for each student that leads to post-secondary success by placing instructional emphasis on college-and career readiness. The current student population to be served by the grant includes 22,360 of which 13,988 qualify for free/reduced lunch and 20,510 are high-needs. Though the STEM-based learning environment student will receive a strong foundation in English language art, mathematics, science, and technology to promote learning and provide a strong foundation to continue in chosen academic careers.

The STEM FIRST program and STEM FIRST Lab is designed to foster a new generation of learners and thinkers at the first stage of their academic career. The district has developed a vision inclusive of the four educational assurances.

This criterion is rated High.

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(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The School District of Manatee County has effectively described the process the applicant used to select schools to participate. The district will implement the Stem First program district-wide in all 43 elementary schools and 8 district owned charter schools. The district currently has 16 schools qualifying for Title I with 75.1% eligible for free and reduced lunch. in addition, the district is interested in providing all elementary students the opportunity to gain knowledge in a personalized learning environment, through a program that will spark creativity while promoting higher-order thinking skills.The district will phase in the school over the first three years of the grant. The District will phase in the installation of 41 STEM FIRST (Fully Integrated Reading Science Technology) elementary Engineer Labs and provide time an opportunities for teacher professional development and curriculum redesign for the STEM FIRST program in all participating elementary schools.

(b) The School District of Manatee County has provided extensive evidence and documentation of for thirty-four public elementary schools and eight charter schools participating in STEMS FIRST. The decision to integrate engineering at the elementary level district-wide was made by the district, while working with the local teachers' union and charter schools. Each elementary principal provided a strong letter of commitment to the proposal.

(c) The School District of Manatee County provided sound demographic evidence of the student and teacher population for each school participating in the STEM FIRST program. The STEM FIRST program will serve 1,232 teachers and 22,360 students. The student population presently includes, 63% of the students to be served in the STEM FIRST are from low-income families and 92% are estimated as high-need which the district considered as either impoverished, speaking English as a Second Language, requiring special education services, or are migrant students who miss school due to family farm work.

The School District of Manatee County has designed a comprehensive plan to support the implementation of the STEM FIRST program.

The criteria will be rated High.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	10

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County has developed a high-quality plan that describes how the proposed reforms will be scaled-up by implementing of the STEM FIRST program. The District has provided effective program goals critical to the success of the reform: Personal learning environment for each student, professional development for teachers and staff, installation of the STEM First Learning Labs, and outreach to parents, businesses, and the community and the development of a coordinating board. The rigorous Common Core State Standards Initiative represents district-wide curriculum change that will drive curriculum in the district and the STEM FIRST program. Teachers will have improved methods of providing lesson plans for the program as they are developed and uploaded online on a Moodle (course management system) along with rubrics and student examples of achievement. Materials and processes developed through the STEM FIRST will be scaled-up and disseminated for duplication and national replication as best practices for STEM elementary education. This program provides strongly demonstrated that students transitioning from the redesigned STEM FIRST elementary schools will enter middle school with the necessary grade-level skills to succeed

Each STEM FIRST program has established an effective framework for accountability. The district will be involved in appropriate training and learning initiatives to support the district-wide reform. The district provided a timeline by year for each objective. The timeline or plan includes activities, information as the person/positions responsible, deliverables, and a rational for each activity. The plan does meet all of the requirements for "high quality" as required by the grant.

This criterion is rated High.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

a. The School District of Manatee County has provided summative assessment data for reading and mathematics that includes achievement goals for each subgroup through 2016-17, using 2010-11 as the baseline year. The district established a AMO target for each subgroup to reduce the percentage on nonproficeint students by half by the year 2016-17. This is an ambitious yet achievable goal.

b. The School District of Manatee County application included a goal to meet the State of Florida AMO targets in reading and mathematics for decreasing the achievement gap. This is an ambitious yet achievable goal for STEM FIRST. Based on results from the pilot STEM FIRST schools, assessment scores were higher for African American males than at other elementary school in the district. With the implementation of STEM FIRST as a district-wide initiative, there is greater likelihood of improved student learning and performance for all students.

c. The School District of Manatee County established an ambitious yet achievable goal for graduation. The graduation rates for the same time period increased for African-American males and Hispanic males. The goals provided are ambitious yet achievable for all students.

d. The District of Manatee County has established ambitious yet achievable goal college enrollment. The district used 2009-10 baseline data provided by the Florida State Department of Education PK-20 Education Data Warehouse. This data was compared to the AMO targets established by the state of Florida and for consistency.

The district has demonstrated a vision that is likely to improve student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by ambitious yet achievable annual goals.

These criteria will be rated High.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	**15**	**11**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a)The School District of Manatee County has demonstrated effective student improvements in various programs over the past four years. In the past two years, students involved in two elementary STEM-based education programs have increased their results on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) as compared to the students who did not have the same opportunity. Higher assessments scores were achieved in mathematics, science, English language arts, and technology. The district has been successful in increasing the graduation rates for student with the exceptions of 2010 -11. The district has documented an increase in the graduation rates for African American and Hispanic males.

(b)Students enrolled the pilot STEMS FIRST schools made significant gains 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade reading and mathematics as compared to non-STEM FIRST students. In 5th grade science, 55% of the students enrolled in the STEMS FIRST schools scored proficient 39% of the students enrolled in traditional schools scored proficient. Scores at each grade level indicate a significant increase for STEM FIRST students. The district did not provide evidence of achievement in persistently low-performing schools.

(c) The School District of Manatee County completed a vigorous Data Project. Various members met from the school to develop tools. Teachers are able to access data for use to inform instruction, parents are able to check their child's progress before official progress report or report card are issued, and students are able to take responsibility for their own learning.

The district has demonstrated strong evidence of improving student achievement outcomes through the STEMS First program. The district did not provide evidence of achievement for low-performing elementary schools

This criteria is rated Middle.

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(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	5

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

a. The School District of Manatee County maintains an extensive website that includes a link on Transparency. The Transparency link provides a collection of documents on finance, salaries, historical data on district, the organizational chart, job descriptions, historic budget data, public salaries, and other documents available for public viewing.

b. Each school's plan contains detailed financial information. The School District of Manatee County's Finance Department provides financial information upon request. During the annual budgeting process all financial information is made available to the public and public comment is welcome. The proposed STEM FIRST budget will be included in the district's transparency. The proposed expenditure provides support directly to the goals of the project.

(c)Each school's plan contains detailed financial information. The School District of Manatee County's Finance Department provides financial information upon request. During the annual budgeting process all financial information is made available to the public and public comment is welcome. A detailed salary scaled is included for instructional staff, paraeducators, assistants, and others.

(d)Each school's plan contains detailed financial information. The School District of Manatee County's Finance Department provides financial information upon request. During the annual budgeting process all financial information is made available to the public and public comment is welcome.

The district has demonstrated reasonable evidence of a system and process for ensuring transparency of district affairs to the public.

This criteria is rated High.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County has demonstrated strong fiscal leadership by receiving several prestigious awards for financial management. The State of Florida has received a state Race to the Top state grant and, creating optimal conditions for the this school district to successfully implement and manage the proposed plan. The district is led by a five-member board, elected by the public to four-year terms. The Board Chairperson has signed-off on the grant as the legal authority for the district. The day-to-day operations are managed by the district superintendent. Participating schools are either housed in district-owned school facilities or is a charter school. Letters of commitment are included for all participating schools.

The district has reasonable and sufficient autonomy from the state to function independently as a school district.

This criteria is rated High.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	10

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The School District of Manatee County created a strong cadre of educational professional form the district charter school, and the teacher's union to assist in the development of STEM FIRST Proposal.

(i)The Manatee Education Association has demonstrated support for the STEM FIRST program by participating in the development of the proposal and providing a letter of support and collaboration.

(b)Letters from community and parent organizations supporting and providing collaboration to the STEM FIRST are included.

The district demonstrated meaningful stakeholder engagement from parent organizations, the community, and the local teacher's union.

This criteria is rated High.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County has provided a high-quality plan for implementing the restructuring of all elementary instructional programs to provide more rigorous, inquiry based curriculum aligned to the Common Core State Standards. The district has identified two needs and gaps to be address and driving this reform initiative. Research has found there is a major gap in the preparation of elementary teachers who teach the STEM curriculum. Throughout the program extensive professional development will be available through multi-model approaches for all teachers in STEM FIRST schools. A gender gap in STEM courses for female students was also identified. Female students traditionally begin limiting classes in STEM courses starting in the 8th grade the point at which career-and college readiness begin. Data from two existing STEM FIRST schools in the district indicate overall students have out-performed students in non-STEM elementary school in the district. The district also has a large presence of minority, low-income and English languor learners.

The district has appropriately identified gaps in the student achievement and instructional knowledge and rigor.

This criterion is rated High.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score

(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	20

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County has implemented an innovative instructional approach to learning at the elementary level through the STEM FIRST. Students in all Pk-5 elementary schools will engage in innovative inquiry-based lessons and higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills. To maintain the involvement of parents, students and families in STEM FIRST schools will receive information regarding the middle and high school Smaller Learning Academies centered on academic careers.

.

(a)

(i). The STEM FIRST program supports students' understanding of learning in relationship to their success through participation in the Engineering Lab. The STEM Lab closely models real-world experiences.Through the lab students, explore concepts expand learning about key components of their experience in all courses. Students participate in hands-on activities with a partner or team to design, build, test, and redesign during each challenge activity or project.

(ii)The STEM FIRST program provides innovative instructional methods that connect elementary student to college-and career readiness through the alignment of the instruction with the Common Core Standards and will acquire 21st century skills. Students will participate in district competitions and a STEM related student organization. Student progress is measured and monitored using an instructional rubric maintained by the student and teacher.

(iii) The School District of Manatee County provided an innovative plan for structuring the STEM FIRST classrooms with resources. Classrooms will be specifically equipped with a multi-media library comprised of non-fiction texts on inventors, structures, and accomplishments to support personalized learning.

(iv)The School District of Manatee County administrators and teachers support multicultural contexts and perspectives through varied methods and activities that motivate and deepen student learning. The elementary schools student population in the district is 53.8% minority and of that, 33.6% are Hispanic; 15.2% are learning English as a Second Language, and 1.1% is children of migrant workers. Each elementary school provides a culturally themed learning experience.

(v)The district has developed an essential and profound learning experience through the STEM Lab's. Students have multiple opportunities and in multiple modalities to master critical academic content and develop trait conducive for learning and the real-world. The traits that are important for the real world include teamwork, goal-setting, communication, creativity, and problem-solving.

b.

(i) The STEM FIRST students are involved in innovative learning experiences in areas of academic interest. The program encourages multimodality and digital learning to support learning at own pace for remediation or supplementation during class, and virtual learning at home.

(ii) The STEM FIRST program provides effective teacher-designed lessons for students to explore in engineering labs that are connected through daily activities and concepts in English-language arts, mathematics or science.

(iii) The district has a focused plan for implementing high-quality content aligned to college and career readiness. STEM FIRST Engineering Lab is aligned with college and career ready standards as well as the Standards for Technological Literacy. The Lab will house a large variety of high-tech equipment Students will provide designated time in the schedule for students to design, prototype, test, build, and create as they think of solutions to everyday problems in robotics, manufacturing, transportation, energy, and other critical topics.

(A)The district has described an effective instructional rubric for the STEM FIRST project. The rubric is used to monitor and document students learning goals. Student and teachers monitor progress towards goals and determine the next course of instruction.

(B)The STEMS FIRST program supports the use of various modalities to process learning to encourage a greater depth of understanding.Students will obtain instructions through blended-learning, multimodalitiy, and the lab experiences to support and enhance learning. Student teams will work together to create and respond further to express an understanding of the high level skills and concepts being taught.

(v) The STEM FIRST program has adopted appropriate modifications to meet the needs of students with disabilities. STEM FIRST teachers and staff will collaborate with the Exceptional Student Education unit to accommodate individual student needs.

(c)The STEM FIRST proposal adequately addresses providing access to training on tools and resources for students. Professional learning will be offered to students through multimodel approaches to include face-to face and e-learning strategies. Through the use of a web-based interactive support for teachers and students, personalized learning activities for instruction, remediation, and enrichment will be available.

The district provides a comprehensive plan for improving learning, personalizing the learning environment, and implementing instructional strategies.

The plan will receive a High rating.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	**20**	**18**

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(i) The School District of Manatee County has developed a comprehensive process that supports the effective use of personalized learning and provides strategies to meets the needs of individuals students. Teachers plan and designed new lessons aligned to state and national standards, including the Common Core Standards and the Career Readiness Standards. Teachers will utilize the Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle process to improve learning, personalizing the learning environment, and providing all students the instructional supports they need to be successful in school through the six steps-- study, select, plan, implement, analyze, and adjust; all essential skills for high school on-time graduation and college- and career-readiness. The Professional Teaching and Learning Cycle includes data-driven activities facilitated by expert teachers with access to on-the spot data regarding students' progress toward meeting individualized identified learning goals.

(ii) The School District of Manatee County has implemented a rigorous curriculum by aligning the Common Core Standards and curriculum content standards to instruction, and assessment across grade levels. The district has strengthened the alignment process by using learning progressions frameworks to inform the identification of learning goals for each unit of instruction and the design of scales of proficiency for each of these learning goals, necessary for both instruction and assessment of student achievement. The district has used appropriate learning resources to develop high-quality learning resources in instructional content and assessment.

(iii) The STEM FIRST project has effectively described the personal learning environment's data collection designed to support student achievement by frequently measuring student progress. The learning environments enable students' progress to be monitored and information collected on a students' progress toward instructional unit goals. Instructional resources are provided to assist the student in progressing toward academic and career goals. The personal learning environment provides a process and tools to match and monitor student needs. Training will be provided to teachers through a multimodel approach to include face-to-face and e-learning strategies A web-based interactive system will be available to both teachers and students that provides personalized learning activities for instructional remediation and enrichment.

(iv) The STEM FIRST project reasonably describes the districts' current evaluation system for teachers and administrators by providing a new level of data performance based on educational research designed to increase student learning. As part of STEM FIRST, assessment of performance, encouragement of professional growth and increased student learning is being incorporated into the Superintendent of Manatee County Schools' evaluation.

(b)

(i)The School District of Manatee County has developed an extensive plan for the STEM FIRST program that ensure access to and knowledge of tools, data, and resources essential for increasing student achievement. The district's STEM FIRST plan provides data-driven training lead by expert teachers. The Moodle Platform has been acquired to provide a set of assessment tools including the item bank. Teachers will be able to access on-the-spot student data that allows for the monitoring of progress toward meeting goals focused on improving classroom instruction. On-going professional development places emphasis on incorporating STEM throughout the all subjects with strategies guiding the process of rigorous inquiry and problem-solving.

(ii)The School District of Manatee County has implemented a cohesive data systems designed through STEM FIRST. Teachers and administrators will be able to track individual student progress in real-time, and consolidate data at the classroom and school level to identify effective instructional practices and enhance training effectiveness for underperforming schools without the burden of waiting for an annual report.

(iii)The School District of Manatee County has implemented unique supplemental instructions designed to target habits of mind or essential traits common to all disciplines that students must develop in order to become successful citizens. These procedures will support the foundation of teaching and learning throughout the district and anchor all academic content to the habits of learning essential to students' broader success in college. The supplemental instructions will further provide tools to address students' individual needs.

(c)

(i)The district has not describes how information from the teachers evaluation system would be used by the school's leadership or team to to implement improvement for individuals or collective educator effectiveness and school culture in order to provide continuous improvements.

(ii) The district has developed a reasonable professional development plan designed to increase student performance and close the achievement gap. The STEM FIRST requires regular professional development and professional or communities team meetings, designed to build on teacher's individual and collective capacity to implement the STEM FIRST project and the effectively implement each component.

(d)The district has provided a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instructions from effective and highly effective teacher and administrators. The district is providing targeted training for all STEM FIRST

teacher and administrator prior to the program start, ongoing throughout the school year, and at the building level though professional learning communities.

The district adequately described a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment to enable all students to graduate and college and career-ready.

This will be rated High.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	**15**	**15**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The School District of Manatee County has a sound governance structure to support the project. The district is governed by a five-member board elected by the public to four-year terms. The day-to-day operation of the district is under the leadership of the Superintendent. An executive team provides assistance and supports all students, teachers and administrators, and parents and community entities. The Professional Learning division is currently rolling-out blended learning district-wide. The latest construction projects in the district are incorporating reusable energy.

(b) The School District of Manatee County maintains reasonable flexibility and autonomy for school leadership teams. All school administrators have responsibility over personnel decisions and will have the ability to fulfill critical staff positions to support the STEM First program. The teachers' union is also a partner in this application and representative on the leadership team. The district described in detail areas of flexibility including roles and responsibilities for educators and non-educators, school-level budgets, and professional learning.

(c)The School District of Manatee County School has adequately demonstrated students are provided the opportunity to progress based on demonstrated mastery in the STEM FIRST program. Through the STEM FIRST students will demonstrate mastery instead of time spent on task. Students will be able to select various methods for solving problems in the STEM FIRST Engineering Labs placing emphasis on competency-based learning strategies. Individualized learning will be demonstrated through the use of a rubric designed for the STEM FIRST program to assess students' learning progression and adjust instructions.

(d)The School District of Manatee County School provides extensive information on how the FIRST STEM program would incorporate giving students the opportunities to demonstrate mastery of standards at multiple times and in multi comparable ways. The digital learning tool will be used for remediation and supplementary support during class time as students in the FIRST STEM program become inquiry-based learners. Students will also demonstrate mastery through writing and reflection.

(e)The School District of Manatee County School has a reasonable plan for adaptable and accessible resources and instructional practices to students with disabilities and English language learners. Examples of accommodations are provided for the STEM FIRST Engineering Lab.The district is in full compliance with IDEA and Title I, providing learning resources and instructional practices that are adaptable and fully accessible to all students including students with disabilities and English language learners.

The district has developed a high-quality plan to with strong policies and procedures to support a strong management team at the district and school level. A clear plan for providing learning resources and supports to all students when and where they are required.

This criteria falls into the High.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	10

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The School District of Manatee County presents evidence that all stakeholders will have the necessary tools and learning resources to support the implementation of STEM FIRST. The district provides training for educators, support staff, administrators and other stakeholders through videos, classes, and online courses. The district's Instructional Technology members serve on the Common Core Design teams and are involved in other instructional development and activities designed to equip today's teachers for tomorrow's challenges.

(b) The FIRST STEM program has developed a plan that will ensure students, parents and educators, and other stakeholders have appropriate levels of technical support. The district's Instructional Technology Department will provide each school site with staff for the set-up and operational support and training for teachers. Strategies for providing technical support will include peer support, online support, and local support during school and for afterschool programs, Junior Career and Technical Student Organizations events, competitions, and mentorship programs.

(c) The School District of Manatee County effectively describes the information technology systems that will used throughout the district and available for the each STEM FIRST program. Currently, a district-wide system is being developed that will allow all users to access to state-level applications and access to appropriate data. An On-line Learning Specialist has been hired to support the instructional improvement component of the data system and guide improvement in classroom instructions. The district will be adding the Moodle as an online learning platform and the FOCUS/SIS has been implemented.

(d) The School District of Manatee County appropriately ensures schools use interoperable data systems by providing access to the Florida Information Resources Network (FIRN), a state-wide system. FIRN provides extensive communications and resources to all school districts in the state of Florida. FIRM enables districts to manage statewide communication and reporting procedures in all district office areas of responsibility including school and district plans, teacher preparation and certification, human resources data, student information data, budget data, and instructional improvement system data an email system, access to the World Wide Web, reporting forms.

The district has described the existence of a strong infrastructure to support personalized learning. Appropriate resources and tools are available at the state, district, and school level.

The criteria are ranked High.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**11**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County developed a comprehensive evaluation plan that includes a process for providing continuous feedback on progress toward the implementation of the project's goals. Formative and process data will be used regularly by the STEM FIRST staff to make adjustments in the inputs, processes, and outputs. A list of summative

evaluation questions and management plan is included that contains data sources/instruments and timelines and responsibilities.

The district did not address how the STEM FIRST program information would publicly share information on investments, professional development, technology, and staff.

This criterion will be rated high-Middle.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The STEM FIRST program has developed effective strategies for maintaining ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders. The Independent Evaluator will provide quarterly reports to the STEM FIRST director summarizing formative findings and provide project staff performance feedback reports to allow for interventions and adaptions of techniques and strategies. The STEM FIRST program will provide additional communications to all stakeholders through such avenues as the Electronic Bulletin Board; school website, newsletter and flyers sent home to families on STEM FIRST; teleconferences; GoToMeeting and Skype; and school-based events for students and parents.

The application incorporates a variety of strategies to reach all stakeholders using traditional and technological approaches.

This criterion is rate High.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

(a)The School District of Manatee County's effectively described the rationale for selecting the performance measures. The district selected academics performance measures in reading and mathematics for all students and student subgroups as the grade appropriate measures of students' academic growth. The district provided detailed charts and narrative information for each grade level with assessment date by subgroups and annual targets.

(b) The School District of Manatee County developed a sound plan to measure rigor and formative information on the STEM FIRST program, rationale in the fidelity of implementation success, and address implementation areas of concern. Through the logic model, the independent evaluator will assess the implementation of key program components: the Stem First Engineering Labs, continuous professional development for teachers and staff, rigorous academic and career-related standards, and personalized programs of study.

(c)The School District of Manatee County developed a comprehensive program evaluation plan designed to review and improve measures. Teachers and administrators will have access to formative and process data to evaluate whether students are engaging in meaningful and productive learning experience and if students are obtaining high standards and career and technical competencies.

The district has provided ambitious yet achievable performance measures.

The criteria in this section receives a High rating.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County has described a plan to evaluate the effectiveness of Race to the Top – District funded activities. The integrated formative and summative evaluation system will determine the effectiveness of the use of resources, administrative support, professional development, the involvement of teachers, business and community partners, and resources from other sources supporting the program. The Independent Evaluator will provide a collection of reports quarterly and annually and communicate frequently with the STEM FIRST staff. .

The STEM FIRST evaluation plan provides reasonable questions to be used in the collection of summative and formative data.

The High rating is being awarded.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

a. The School District of Manatee County has proved a sound and reasonable budget to support the STEM FIRST program in all elementary school, district-wide. The district has provided adequate narrative information and the required budget tables with complete expenditures for the term of the grant. The grant will be supported by additional funds from other sources in the amount of $4,733,000.

b. Funds to support the STEM FIRST program are reasonable and sufficient to support the goals and objectives of the proposal. The budget includes a Project Director, STEM First Engineering teachers for all forty-one schools, Instructional Innovators, and other supporting staff; construction cost at Manatee Technical Institute for adding space to house the STEM experience at the MTI Tech Zone, laboratories supplies; and travel and extended-pay for teachers to attend conferences, trainings, and participate in school-based curriculum learning opportunities and development. The budget contains expenditures that will be spread over several years of the grant.

c.

i. The STEM FIRST proposed budget provided a sound description of all funds to be used for the implementation and support of the grant.
ii. The district will be continue to sustain the STEM FIRST program by incorporating the required expenses into school and departmental budgets. The district has committed a minimum of $750,000 of direct cost per year over a three-year period after the grant has ended to sustain professional development, supplies, curriculum and instructional materials, and support.

The School District of Manatee County has provided a reasonable budget for the STEM FIRST accomplish all project goals.

The criteria for the budget are rated High.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	10

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County's has provided a reasonable plan for sustainability. The district will continue the cost of the teachers and provide the consumables and supplies as part of their normal instructional budget. The district will continue for three years after the grant to provide funding in the amount of $750,000. These funds will be used to sustain professional development, curriculum and instructional material and supplies, the STEM labs, and technical upgrades when needed.

This criterion is ranked High.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**10**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

1. The School District of Manatee County's STEM FIRST program has developed a comprehensive partnerships with public and private organizations designed to address the needs of high-risk families and children. The STEM FIRST Program initiative seeks to training teachers in community partners services Fostering improved referral services available to students and families; the participation of youth oriented organizations to serve in the STEM DAY activities and assist in building awareness of the importance of learning STEM concepts; and establishing the Career and Technical Student Organizations at the elementary level as a way to encourage young students' career aspirations and provide enriching experiences through peer mentoring, leadership development, academic and career development, professional development, and community service.
2. The STEM FIRST program is designed to provide improved awareness of services of community supports by high-need families and increased development of leadership skills and other core communication skills.
3. (a)The district's data system will document demographic information on student in the STEM FIRST program. (b)Data from the STEM FIRST program and the community initiative will be used to improve results for all students and provide insight into the challenges of minority students' face. (c)Though the STEM FIRST program district-wide program, additional partnerships will be established to offer tutoring, mentoring and leadership programs. (d)THE STEMS FIRST program will use the formative and summative evaluation process to monitor improvement results.
4. The district will provide training on identifying students needing additional assistance, department within the district serving students with high needs will collaborate with the STEM FIRST program, and personalized learning will be available through the program.
5. `The STEM FIRST program has described how the district will build capacity through organizing a special council to of partners, conducting a needs assessment, and engaging parents and families through special activates and surveying to assess awareness of community partners.
6. The district has established annual ambitious yet achievable performance to decrease the number of students in ISS and OSS.

The district has developed a comprehensive Competitive Preference Priority to meet the need of high-need students and families.

The Competitive Preference Priority will be rated High.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	**Met/Not Met**	**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The School District of Manatee County's STEM FIRST program has demonstrated throughout the grant Absolute Priority 1: personalized Learning Environments through the redesign of the curriculum to include the Core Curriculum Initiative and Career and College Readiness , establishment of the Engineering Lab in each elementary school, extensive professional development for teachers and staff, and the integration of strategies, technology and tools to provide personalized instruction for all students.

Total	**210**	**200**

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0228FL-3 for School District of Manatee County, FL

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant proposes a comprehensive and coherent reform vision; the narrative is lucid, persuasive, predictably achievable and is consistent with the RTTD Absolute Priority:

• A key component of the application is its STEM FIRST (Fully Integrated Reading, Science, Technology) program. This program is responsive to the four core educational assurance areas specified in the RTTD notice and supports the applicant's district-wide Theory of Action which is designed to build the content knowledge of teachers and principals and to equip teachers with best practices in the delivery of instruction.

• This reviewer calls attention to the fact that the applicant has determined to include all of its K-5 schools (41 schools) in its RTTD proposal. This is especially significant since ALL K-5 students are eligible for the program thus addressing the full range of student demographics including special needs students.

• Because all district K-5 schools are involved the issue of scaling-up the program within the district is moot BUT the applicant has visions of sharing the program results regionally and nationally.

• The proposed STEM FIRST program envisions increased individual student performance in core academic areas through expanded implementation of successful early STEM learning experiences especially including elementary students. The district is determined to ensure that all elementary students have the opportunity to gain knowledge in a personalized learning environment and to have access to STEM-based learning experiences that promote higher order thinking skills using inquiry-based learning.

• The proposed reform agenda rests on an existing and fundamental district-wide commitment to increase the high school graduation rate, strengthen teacher quality, improve college and career readiness skills, develop strong instructional leaders, close the achievement gap, provide improved preparation of students for postsecondary education and careers, enable real-time access to data to support instruction and provide appropriate professional development opportunities for teachers.

• Impressively, this proposal builds upon critical reforms initiated by the applicant's continuing involvement in the State's earlier RTTT grant and thus represents a significant and desirable extension of that initiative. This involvement includes but is not limited to the following which relate directly to the applicant's reform vision:

—development/implementation of a paperless benchmark student assessment system

—development of focused professional development including virtual learning and technology-based training

—development of electronic documentation of student learning

—introduction of Rezulli Learning strategies in selected schools to deepen student learning and to increase critical thinking and problem-solving

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant's response to criterion (A) (2) provides comprehensive and persuasive information/confirmation relative to the implementation of its reform proposal including but not limited to the following:

• Applicant has determined that ALL of its K-5 elementary schools will become a part of its STEM FIRST project. This confirms satisfaction of criterion (A)(2)(a). Applicant provides additional information per satisfaction of this criterion and affirms its commitment to ensure that ALL elementary students have the opportunity to gain knowledge in a personalized learning environment. An impressive 99% of the district's K-5 elementary schools will be phased in over the first three years of the project

• Applicant reports that a total of 22,360 students will become involved in its STEM FIRST project. Of these 13,988 receive free/reduced lunch benefits and 13,988 are classified as high-needs students. (A)(2)(c).

• Applicant provides clear and comprehensive graphics which illustrate planned involvement of participating schools between 2012 and 2016

• Implementation/facilitation of STEM FIRST will be through the phasing in of 41 STEM FIRST elementary Engineer Labs while simultaneously providing for teacher professional development and appropriate curriculum redesign.

• This reviewer believes that the concept of Elementary Engineer Labs is ambitious, bold and promising and consistent with the RTTD Absolute Priority.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant has presented an impressive high quality plan which is responsive to goals, activities and their rationale, timeline, deliverables, parties responsible and overall credibility. Comprehensive information is provided as to how the proposed reforms will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform to support district-wide change beyond the participating schools. Specifically:

• A key component of the application is its STEM FIRST (Fully Integrated Reading, Science Technology) program; STEM FIRST is planned as the basis for introducing a theory of change which will articulate science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education; the concept is novel, impressive and relates directly to the RTTD Absolute Priority.

• Because all district K-5 schools are involved in the STEM FIRST project the issue of scaling-up the program within the district becomes moot BUT the applicant has visions of sharing the program results regionally and nationally.

• The Moodle (Course Management System) will be used to upload online lesson plans plus rubrics and examples of student work; the intent is to allow dissemination of the applicant's developmental work eventually to a national audience.

• The level of detail related to specific goals and objectives is comprehensive; development/implementation/extension of the STEM FIRST program is projected through 2016.

• The development/implementation/extension of the STEM FIRST program is presented in a persuasive and arguably achievable series of logical steps.

• The STEM FIRST program is designed to be scaled up to include LEA-wide change and reform and will emphasize unique components including but not limited to real-world problem solving, inquiry based learning and a personalized learning environment; these emphases are embedded in the Applicant's RTTD proposal.

• Facilitation of STEM FIRST will include phasing in of 41 STEM FIRST elementary Engineer Labs while simultaneously providing for related teacher professional development and appropriate curriculum redesign.

• The narrative description of a sample STEM Engineering Lab is impressive and appears to be achievable and feasible.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant's reform vision will predictably result in improved student learning and performance and increased equity as demonstrated by its ambitious yet achievable annual goals.

(a) Summative Assessments (proficiency status and growth):

• Florida's waiver under the ESEA requires the state to report performance on Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) in reading and mathematics. The AMO targets for each subgroup of students and all students will show whether the subgroup or all students are on track to reduce the percentage of non-proficient students by half by 2016-2017 using 2010-2011 as the baseline year.

• Detailed AMO goals and timelines related to (A) (4) (a) for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and post grant 2016-2017 are presented in clear, concise chart format. They appear to be reasonable and achievable.

(b) Decreasing achievement gaps:

• Based on evidence from pilot STEM FIRST schools, Afro-American males' overall assessment scores increased impressively. The proposed extension of STEM FIRST to ALL K-5 elementary schools is cause for optimism that improved student learning and increased equity will occur overall and for demographically defined subgroups.

• Applicant's goal is to meet Florida's AMO targets in reading and mathematics rather than the presently established district AMOs with the intent to ensure that the percentage of non-proficient students is reduced by more than one-half by 2016. It appears that this goal is to be achieved during the projected post grant period.

• Detailed AMO goals and timelines related to (A)(4)(b) for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and post grant 2016-2017 are presented in clear, concise chart format and are broken out by appropriate demographic detail. They appear to be reasonable and achievable.

(c) Graduation rates:

• Detailed graduation rate goals and timelines related to (A)(4)(c) for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and post grant 2016-2017 are presented in clear, concise chart format and are broken out by appropriate demographic detail. They appear to be reasonable and achievable.

(d) College enrollment:

• Detailed graduation rate goals and timelines related to (A)(4)(c) for the years 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and post grant 2016-2017 are presented in clear, concise chart format and are broken out by appropriate demographic detail. They appear to be reasonable and achievable.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	**15**	**13**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has mostly satisfied this criterion.

Applicant provides multiple convincing examples of success in the past four years in advancing student learning and achievement and increasing equity in learning and teaching including descriptions, charts and graphs. Examples include but are not limited to:

• Narrative detail describes the district's involvement during the past several years as a participating LEA in the state's RTTT grant. This information is persuasive and discusses multiple project goals as well as project progress that relate to the criterion.

• Narrative description of district-wide student advisory program designed to assist students in addressing academic and career goals. This program is complemented by curricular and instructional offerings including AVID, AP and IB which have seen increasing enrollments.

• Chart data depict the district's Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) project—again showing a persuasive level of detail divided into goals, objectives, comments and recommendations.

(B)(1)(a)

• Graphs depict cohort graduation rates, number of AP exams taken, STEM learning (FCAT) in reading, mathematics and science for grades 3, 4 and 5 which show achievement gains in each instance.

(B)(1)(b)

• Applicant's data do not indicate whether or not the gains reported in (a) are statistically significant nor do they clearly indicate relative performance gains by the district's persistently lowest achieving schools. Information requested in the criterion appears to be embedded in the statistical data which the applicant has provided.

(B)(1)(c)

• District is in the process of creating a single sign-on system as a means of making student performance data available in a timely manner to multiple stakeholders with a target completion date of 2013-2014.

• District has completed The Data Project (funded by state's RTTT grant) which provides user friendly reports that schools need to effectively monitor multiple kinds of initiatives including those which relate to dropout prevention and school improvement and accountability.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides satisfactory evidence of a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices and investments. This evidence includes but is not limited to:

• Applicant has an elected school board which derives its authority from the Florida State Board of Education and the Florida Legislature.

• Actual local school level expenditures are public record.

• District maintains a website which provides public access to fully disclosed fiscal information in a timely and systematic manner including district's Final Amended Budget.

(B)(2)(a)

• District website connects public to personnel salary information. The public salary link is maintained by the Tampa Tribune newspaper as a way to guarantee transparency.

(B)(2)(b)

• Detailed financial information is a part of each school's plan and is public record specifically including the salary schedule for all categories of paraprofessional personnel.

(B)(2)(c)

• Detailed financial information is a part of each school's plan and is public record specifically including the salary schedule for teaching personnel.

(B)(2)(d)

• Detailed financial information is a part of each school's plan. The district's finance department provides detailed financial information upon request.

• Applicant notes that its RTTD proposal includes clear descriptions of each proposed expenditure to ensure complete transparency.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides satisfactory evidence of sufficient conditions and autonomy under state legal, statutory and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments described in its RTTD proposal. This evidence includes but is not limited to:

• District has a publically elected Board of Education which derives its authority from the Florida State Board of Education and the Florida Legislature.

• District is recipient of Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States.

• District maintains high quality data collection and management system including consistent, accurate and expedient reporting processes.

• District has assembled an impressive leadership management team to oversee implementation of its proposed RTTD proposal. Comprehensive information about the qualifications of individual team members is provided.

• District has created a coordinating council comprised of a broad cross section of professional educators, teacher representatives, parents, student representatives, business leaders and other qualified persons to assist in project implementation.

• District provides an organizational chart which gives clear lines of responsibility related to management and implementation of its proposed RTTD reformss

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant has satisfied this criterion.

Applicant provides satisfactory evidence of meaningful stakeholder support for its proposal. This evidence includes but is not limited to:

(B)(4)(a)

• Extensive intradistrict involvement of key leadership personnel directly related to the proposed reform. This participation appears to be substantial and vital to the development and implementation of the proposal.

• Relevant to this criterion is a district coordinating council— referenced in (B)(3) above—comprised of a broad cross section of professional educators, teacher representatives, parents, student representatives, business leaders and other qualified persons.

• Participation and support of 99% of district's elementary schools including charter schools is substantiated. Supportive data are provided in the appendix to the application.

(B)(4)(b)

• The Manatee Education Association confirmed its support of the application in writing.

• An impressive number of other letters of support for the proposal are provided by the applicant and are included in the appendix. These letters reflect a broad cross section of various entities and agencies and augur well for continued support during the proposal's implementation phases.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides satisfactory evidence of an analysis of needs and gaps including a high quality plan for doing so.

Evidence includes but is not limited to:

• Prior to its application, district conducted a review of current achievement data followed by a gap analysis focused on elements of student success common to higher performing elementary schools. Of special significance in this analysis was the gain by students—especially by gender—in elementary school settings that had implemented STEM labs over more than a two year period. This finding has been critical to the development of the applicant's RTTD proposal which focuses on the creation of personalized learning environments through the implementation of elementary school STEM engineering labs.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	**20**	**20**

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion by providing persuasive evidence of a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment in participating K-5 elementary schools with curriculum and instruction aligned to college and career-ready standards.

Evidence for this evaluation includes but is not limited to the following:

• Project is designed to enable all K-5 students to be at grade level upon entering middle school.(C)(1)(a)(i); (C)(1)(b)(iii)

• Students will be able to set/refine learning goals and to effectively use digitally-based resources in a personalized learning environment. (C)(1)(c)

• Inquiry-based learning is at the center of applicant's proposal and will occur through hands-on experiences in elementary STEM engineering labs. (C)(1)(a)(ii)

• STEM engineering labs will provide opportunities for collaborative project-based learning.(C)(1)(a)(iii); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Families of students are envisioned as being directly involved in a variety of ways that are potentially challenging but with high levels of pay back in terms of student achievement. (C)(1)(a)(ii)

• STEM engineering labs are designed to involve students at an individual level in deep learning experiences including English/language arts, math and science. (C)(1)(a)(v); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• STEM engineering labs will be equipped with multi-media libraries which are seen as fundamental to the applicant's emphasis on personalized learning. These libraries are conceived in such a way as to provide multiple kinds of unique learning experiences for elementary students. (C)(1)(a)(v); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Blended learning options are also projected for teachers and students as a way to broaden and deepen learning opportunities. (C)(1)(a)(v)

• STEM engineering labs are fundamentally conceived of as being the venue in which students will use many different modalities to design, conceptualize, collaborate, explore and otherwise engage in the development of 21st century skills. (C)(1)(a)(iii); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Schools with STEM engineering labs will emphasize flexibility in learning and teaching—including multimodality and digital learning— in order to facilitate heightened levels of achievement for all students including those enrolled in the district's exceptional student education program. (C)(1)(b)(iii)

• Students in grades K-5 will have access to instruction which is grounded in the Common Core Standards as well as Career Readiness and Tech Standards linked to 21st century skills. (C)(1)(a)(iii); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Increased evidence of college readiness and/or career readiness represent fundamental district goals and are seen as initially achievable beginning in the K-5 grades. (C)(1)(b)(iv)(B); (C)(1)(b)(iii)

• District's vision for its elementary engineering labs includes strong emphasis on STEM education for ALL students specifically including females, high needs students and minorities. (C)(1)(b)(v); (C)(1)(c)

• District's vision for its elementary engineering labs includes student immersion in a school culture centered on real-world-problem solving leading to self-sufficiency and success academically and career-wise. (C)(1)(a)(ii)

• District's vision for its elementary engineering labs includes specific emphasis on access and exposure to diverse cultures, contexts, and perspectives that motivate and deepen individual student learning in order to provide an emotionally secure learning environment.(C)()(a)(iv)

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	**20**	**20**

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides substantial and convincing evidence of a high-quality plan for improving learning and teaching by personalizing the learning environment. Emphasis is given to the plan's inclusion of instructional strategies appropriate for all participating students that will enable them to pursue a rigorous course of study aligned to college- and career-ready

standards and college- and career-ready graduation requirements and that will accelerate their learning through support of their individual needs.

Evidence includes but is not limited to the following:

• District has committed to reforming its Teaching and Learning Division. This will directly impact the liklihood of success in implementing its proposed RTTD plan to personalize the learning environment for students and teachers in participating schools. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will engage in a continuing review/rewrite of the county core curriculum to align with college and career-based Common Core Standards Initiative. This is essential to the quality of the applicant's plan to structure learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(b)(ii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will implement a professional teaching and learning cycle of activities in which teachers collaboratively plan and implement newly designed lessons aligned with local, state and national standards specifically including Common Core Standards. This is an essential step in the district's move toward personalized learning. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will implement a professional learning cycle strategy which will utilize a data-driven process to allow immediate access by teachers to student progress in meeting individualized learning goals. This is essential to implementing the applicant's personalized learning plans. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(a)(iii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will utilize newly developed curricula to introduce next generation scientific and engineering practices appropriate to each grade level, K-5. This essential to the success of the applicant's proposed elementary engineering labs. (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(b)(ii)

• District will develop an aligned curriculum which connects standards, instruction and assessment across traditional grade levels. This will involve unpacking content standards in order to develop a progression of learning goals. This is essential to the quality of the applicant's plan to structure learning and development goals linked to college- and career-ready standards. (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(ii)

• District will enable students and teachers to enter relevant learning data in a "personal learning environment data collection system." This will result in a topical learning file for the student. The intent is to ensure that each student is always aware of his/her status and in control in terms of progress in achieving academic content goals AND is on the path to graduating on time and being college and career ready. These capacities are essential to the implementation of a personalized learning environment. (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(a)(iii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will ensure that students and their parents have access to a support system—including tools and other resources—that they understand how to use in order to track and manage individualized learning. This is an essential step in implementing personalized learning goals. (C)(2)(a)(iii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii)

• District will initiate a professional learning initiative designed to develop a teacher corps capable of leading in the implementation of a restructured curriculum and visionary teaching practices including multimodal instruction approaches such as face-to-face and e-learning. This is an essential step in implementing personalized learning goals. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(a)(iv); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• Teachers will have access to assessment tools such as an item bank on a Moodle platform with defined learning targets for each unit of instruction. Assessments can be created quickly and administered frequently. The focus will be on formative assessment. (Applicant provides a convincing example of data-driven instruction at the primary school level.) This is an essential step in implementing personalized learning goals. (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District emphasizes the importance of its proposal in increasing the effectiveness of teaching and school performance and the positive contribution anticipated for the current teacher and principal evaluation system. The latter will be impacted

through the immediate availability of new levels of data about individual student performance.(C)(2)(a)(iv); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• Teachers and principals will be able to track student progress in real time. Performance data can be consolidated at the classroom level. Effective teaching practices will be more easily identified. These capabilities are particularly important for improving teaching and learning in underperforming schools since data feedback will be on a fast track as opposed to forcing schools to wait for an annual progress report. (C)(2)(a)(iv); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• Applicant has a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science). Program's primary emphasis is on STEM education, grades K-5 and includes ALL K-5 schools in district. (C)(2)(a)(ii); C)(2)(b)(ii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	**15**	**15**

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides satisfactory evidence of a high quality plan to support project implementation through appropriate policies and infrastructure as defined in the notice. This evidence includes but is not limited to the following:

• District functions within the guidelines and administrative rules and regulations provided by Florida Statutes (FS).

• District promulgates a fundamental goal of inspiring its 45,000 PreK-12 students to "learn, dream and achieve" as they move toward responsible and successful adulthood.

• District maintains a comprehensive physical plant operation which includes the infrastructure necessary to implement its proposed RTTD plan.

• District has a Professional Learning Division currently focused on developing instructional skills essential to the implementation of a blended learning program district-wide. This program combines face-to-face classroom methods with computer-mediated activities.

• District intends to build a culture of flexibility and autonomy for its instructional support staff. School level leadership has substantial discretion over personnel decisions and will—with RTTD funds—have the authority to fill critical staff positions.

• District's teachers' union has committed to being an integral part in the development of a culture of flexibility and autonomy as described above although the applicant does not elaborate on the extent of this commitment.

• Each of the 41 schools included in district's proposal has the authority, flexibility and autonomy necessary to achieve proposed goals, objectives and activities—including management of school level budgets containing funds anticipated from RTTD.

• District will enable students enrolled in proposed elementary learning labs to progress on the basis of demonstrated content mastery as opposed to seat time or other conventional practices.

• Curriculum and instruction will be intensely personalized student by student within the structure of the proposed elementary Engineering Labs.

• Digital learning will be a fundamental tool in facilitating interactive study and blended learning instructional practices.

• Opportunities will be provided for virtual learning for both students and teachers with model lessons, vetted links and other types of resources made available.

• District is in full compliance with IDEA and Title I programs and related legal requirements.

• District's proposed plan will ensure continued equal access and full inclusion of ALL students relative to the full range of personalized instructional experiences and opportunities envisioned by the applicant's proposal.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

This criterion addresses the extent to which the applicant has a high-quality plan to support project implementation through comprehensive policies and appropriate infrastructure. Applicant's response includes but is not limited to the following:

• District has been engaged for past decade in developing the infrastructure required to provide full IT connectivity among schools, parents and students. A state-of-the-art IT system includes provision of essential tools and district-wide internet access for all educational stakeholders.

• District is a partner with state and local government agencies in the development of system(s) which ensures digital interoperability among all public agencies.

• District emphasizes the development of "open systems" responsive to all levels of users and which ensures transparency through availability of all public records.

• District maintains a strong Instructional Technology Department which offers face-to-face, online and blended learning opportunities designed to support a District-wide Technology and Learning Strategy. This is integral to district's RTTD proposal. (D)(2)(b)

• District's Technology Department maintains an ambitious and convincing support system for teachers engaged in integrating the Common Core curriculum including development of 21st century professional learning experiences basic to the present RTTD proposal. (D)(2)(b)

• District has developed a comprehensive digital-based system to facilitate open communication between school and home. This system contains an impressive array of tools and strategies which are augmented by still additional digital resources maintained at the school level including blogs and wikis. Students also have access to a variety of additional online instructional resources.

• District is in the process of making sure that its instructional improvement system is fundamentally easy for students, teachers, parents and school administrators to use. This initiative includes the ability to depict student and school growth with data disaggregated by subjects and demographics.

• District has developed a local area network to serve schools and district offices. This system enables the collection of student data, assessment and accountability information, budgets, reporting and planning documentation and professional development.

• District assures that all hardware and software acquired through RTTD funds will be subject to interoperability requirements.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	**15**	**15**

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides appropriate and convincing evidence of a high quality plan for monitoring and continuously improving its plan during the life of the RTTD grant. This evidence includes but is not limited to the following:

• District will use both formative and summative assessments in monitoring successful/unsuccessful implementation of its plan.

• District will use a qualified independent evaluation team for data collection and reporting as a part of its plan to ensure transparency.

• Independent evaluators will communicate progress data to all appropriate parties on a quarterly basis.

• Annual project progress reports will be compiled cooperatively by internal staff and the external evaluation team.

• Formative evaluations will focus on levels and quality of implementation. Summative evaluations will emphasize overall impacts and outcomes of the project.

• Evaluators will collect data from teachers, students, parents administrators and external business and community agency partners. Frequent school visitations are projected including the development and use of appropriate surveys, interview protocols and observation instruments.

• District's data management system is currently capable of collecting important project outcome data related to academic performance, attendance, discipline, course credits, enrollments, etc. These data bases will be available to evaluators and will be used to disaggregated student data demographically.

• Evaluators will use a proven logic model—Killion (2002) and Stufflebeam (2002)—to gather data on all four levels of the project. This information is amplified and illustrated by a creative and convincing graphic representation of the model.

• District provides persuasive detailed information about its planned summative evaluation questions and management plan to be used in project monitoring. Data source instruments are convincingly described as well as data regarding timelines, frequency of data collection and responsibility.

• Applicant's independent evaluator and project director will provide oral and written reports summarizing formative findings on at least a quarterly basis to all stakeholders.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicants has high-quality approach for continuously improving its plan. Evidence includes but is not limited to the following:

• District's independent evaluation team (discussed in earlier criterion) will provide oral and written reports on at least a quarterly basis which summarize formative assessment data. Emphasis will be on outcome measures including student achievement, student engagement, professional development and business community involvement.

• Annual written summative evaluation reports will be used to document the status of the project in terms of targets and benchmarks.

• An end of grant report will be broadly disseminated and will address all project goals. It will additionally provide a summary of the quasi-experimental studies conducted during the implementation phase of the grant and will provide information about sustainability of the reforms that have been implemented during the project.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant provides convincing evidence of the planned use of ambitious yet achievable performance measures overall and by subgroup. The information presented is in both narrative and chart formats and more than satisfies the requirements of this criterion. Evidence provided by applicant includes but is not limited to the following:

• District presents information about performance measures that represent the most reliable and consistent sources available and which will be used in evaluating the project. These performance measures are rigorous, timely and appropriate for developing formative evaluations.

• District provides a detailed chart which delineates the nature of the instruments to be employed together with lists of the targets for student achievement gains associated with the project.

• Performance measures include K-2 Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading—comprehension portion; K-2 Mathematics Benchmark Assessment; Grades 3-5 FCAT 2.0 in reading and mathematics; SAT-10 for grades K-2; and K-5 Social-emotional leading indicators. Accordingly, the applicant has satisfied the required number of performance indicators as stipulated in the notice.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	**5**	**5**

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant appropriately addresses evaluation of the effectiveness of its investments. It is noted that substantial supporting evidence is to be found elsewhere throughout the application. However, additional evidence is noted:

• District funded activities such as professional development, those that employ technology, those that focus on increased productivity, better use of time and more effective use of financial resources will be evaluated parallel to the evaluation of other RTTD plan components.

• District has a long history of self-assessment reaching back approximately twenty-five years. This process is explained and summarized in the application.

• District specifically cites teacher/principal evaluation processes and its School Leader Assessment (MSLA) program as a means to ensure selection of high quality principals and assistant principals.

• District's professional evaluation system is based on the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices guidelines which reflect the contributions of nationally known educators. This evaluation system complies with Florida School Board Rules and Regulations and with Florida Statutes.

• District is collaborating with the Florida Department of Education in the development and use of Value Added Metrics in teacher/principal evaluations.

• District notes that its intention is that the activities, policies, practices and other impacts which are derived from implementation of the RTTD proposal will not require substantial investment following the initial four year funding phase because “They will have become the way of doing business” in the district’s elementary schools.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant appropriately and convincingly identifies all funds that will support the project through presentation of a comprehensive budget narrative supported by charts and tables. Information provided in response to (F)(1) is significant for its clarity and completeness and the attention that has been given to budget details. The proposed budget appears to be reasonable and sufficient to support implementation of the applicant's proposal.

• District provides comprehensive budget summary in narrative and chart form. This summary covers budget categories and projected expenditures for each of the four project years.

• District provides overall budget summary narrative which is notable for its clarity and conciseness.

• District has presented budget data in such a manner that application reviewers have clear access to all required fund usages proposed in the application.

• Funds from other sources in support of the project are reported in the amount of $4,733,000.

• Applicant provides appropriate budget information regarding one time investments and those funds which will be used for ongoing operational costs. One time investments are significantly reflected in the creation of STEM Labs in 41 schools ($11,198,507 in grant funds).

• Applicant provides sufficient evidence of its plans for assuring long term project fiscal sustainability. Applicant explicitly states that it intends to allocate district funds during and beyond the grant period in order to sustain its STEM FIRST project.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	**10**	**10**

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant satisfies this criterion.

Applicant envisions long term funding (i.e., sustainability) of its project through incorporation of activities, policies and practices derived from implementation of its elementary Engineering Labs into the regular structure of K-5 education. As a consequence, a major portion of the budget required to sustain the project after year four will become a part of the general fund allocation for regular K-5 school operations.

Applicant also plans to ensure sustainability based on the following:

• Collaboration and support of its business partners including manufacturers of supplies and equipment that will be purchased for the elementary Engineering Labs.

• Purchase of quality supplies for use in its elementary Engineering Labs which will last well beyond the four years of the grant.

• Identification of STEM activities that are not heavily dependent on expensive consumable supplies. Presently existing labs are funded by individual school budgets and/or community and district departments.

• Use of annual Florida Department Instructional Materials allocation to help sustain its revamped Engineering Lab libraries.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	**10**	**10**

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

Competitive Preference Priority

(1) A coherent and sustainable partnership

Applicant has presented a credible competitive preference priority proposal to build community awareness and strengthen ties within District's participating RTTD schools, This partnership will be between public and private organizations. Its primary goal will be to specifically address the needs of high-risk families especially including minority children and those living in poverty. Applicant provides an impressive list of sixteen agencies to be initially included in the partnership. The partnership will support these goals:

• Each youth organization will become part of a network system in which project teachers are trained in community partner services in order to improve student referral process.

• District will host STEM Days for youth service organizations in order to develop student awareness of the importance of learning science, technology, engineering and mathematical concepts in a fun and nonthreatening manner.

• Existing career and technical student organizations within the county's high schools will be invited to extend their programs to the elementary level in keeping with the focus of the district's RTTD grant proposal.

• Extension of existing high school STEM initiatives to the elementary level will serve as a springboard for younger students' career aspirations. Included will be peer mentoring, leadership development, academic and career development, professional development and community service.

(2) Population level desired results

• Goals will include connecting high needs families with local service organizations in order to develop and enhance the concept of the "whole child" especially including those who are experiencing significant poverty. This step will include tutoring, mentoring, leadership development and other related services.

(3) The proposed partnership will:

• Track the selected indicators that measure each result at the aggregate level for all children within the LEA or consortium. District will use its existing data system in support of smaller agencies who lack the digital assessment capacity to track this information.

• All data from the district's RTTD project and from the community outreach initiative will be utilized to improve the services each entity is seeking to provide—especially including those services directed to minorities and the poor.

• All elementary students in the county will gain access to a STEM school as defined in the RTTD proposal.

(4) The partnership will integrate education and other services by organizations which focus on special needs students.

• District has several departments geared toward helping special needs students. Collaboration with other community agencies has the potential to better introduce special needs students to personalized learning experiences.

(5) The partnership and the LEA will build staff capacity by providing tools and other supports:

• A STEM First Community Council will be formed to help govern the program and to ensure that the partnership's efforts align with the educational component found in the RTTD proposal.

• Surveys will be developed and administered in order to conduct needs assessments. Online tools such as Survey Monkey will be used for this purpose.

• The Stem First Community Council will create a decision-making process and the supporting infrastructure to select, implement and evaluate appropriate supports.

• Parent and family engagement is proposed to occur through various kinds of publicity and events to call attention to services available and to the STEM First program.

(e) The STEM First community council will routinely assess the district's progress in creating a viable partnership.

(6) Applicant provides a table showing population groups, types of results and desired results to be assessed in response to this criterion.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	**Met/Not Met**	**Met**

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The absolute priority has been met. Evidence for this judgment is significantly reflected in the quality of the applicant's responses to the multiple criteria contained in the notice. Applicant proposes a comprehensive and coherent reform vision. Applicant's narrative is lucid, persuasive, predictably achievable and is consistent with the RTTD Absolute Priority.

Evidence for this reviewer's judgment specifically includes but is not limited to the following:

• Applicant proposes to implement a STEM FIRST (Fully Integrated Reading, Science, Technology) program. This program is responsive to the four core educational assurance areas specified in the RTTD notice and supports the applicant's district-wide Theory of Action which is designed to build the content knowledge of teachers and principals and to equip teachers with best practices in the delivery of instruction.

• The proposed STEM FIRST program envisions increased individual student performance in core academic areas through expanded implementation of successful STEM learning experiences especially including those for elementary students. The district is determined to ensure that all elementary students have the opportunity to gain knowledge in a personalized learning environment and to have access to STEM-based learning experiences that promote higher order thinking skills using inquiry-based learning.

• Students in grades K-5 will have access to instruction which is grounded in the Common Core Standards as well as Career Readiness and Tech Standards linked to 21st century skills. (C)(1)(a)(iii); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Increased evidence of college readiness and/or career readiness represent fundamental district goals and are seen as initially achievable beginning in the K-5 grades. (C)(1)(b)(iv)(B); (C)(1)(b)(iii)
• Students will be able to set/refine learning goals and to effectively use digitally-based resources in a personalized learning environment. (C)(1)(c)

• Inquiry-based learning is at the center of applicant's proposal and will occur through hands-on experiences in elementary STEM engineering labs. (C)(1)(a)(ii)

• STEM engineering labs will provide opportunities for collaborative project-based learning.(C)(1)(a)(iii); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• STEM engineering labs are designed to involve students at an individual level in deep learning experiences including English/language arts, math and science. (C)(1)(a)(v); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Blended learning options are also projected for teachers and students as a way to broaden and deepen learning opportunities. (C)(1)(a)(v)

• STEM engineering labs are fundamentally conceived of as being the venue in which students will use many different modalities to design, conceptualize, collaborate, explore and otherwise engage in the development of 21st century skills. (C)(1)(a)(iii); (C)(1)(b)(iii); (C)(1)(c)

• Schools with STEM engineering labs will emphasize flexibility in learning and teaching—including multimodality and digital learning— in order to facilitate heightened levels of achievement for all students including those enrolled in the district's exceptional student education program. (C)(1)(b)(iii)

• District has committed to reforming its Teaching and Learning Division. This will directly impact the liklihood of success in implementing its proposed RTTD plan to personalize the learning environment for students and teachers in participating schools. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will implement a professional teaching and learning cycle of activities in which teachers collaboratively plan and implement newly designed lessons aligned with local, state and national standards specifically including Common Core Standards. This is an essential step in the district's move toward personalized learning. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will implement a professional learning cycle strategy which will utilize a data-driven process to allow immediate access by teachers to student progress in meeting individualized learning goals. This is essential to implementing the applicant's personalized learning plans. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(a)(iii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will enable students and teachers to enter relevant learning data in a "personal learning environment data collection system." This will result in a topical learning file for the student. The intent is to ensure that each student is always aware of his/her status and in control in terms of progress in achieving academic content goals AND is on the path to graduating on time and being college and career ready. These capacities are essential to the implementation of a personalized learning environment. (C)(2)(a)(ii); (C)(2)(a)(iii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District will ensure that students and their parents have access to a support system—including tools and other resources—that they understand how to use in order to track and manage individualized learning. This is an essential step in implementing personalized learning goals. (C)(2)(a)(iii); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii)

• District will initiate a professional learning initiative designed to develop a teacher corps capable of leading in the implementation of a restructured curriculum and visionary teaching practices including multimodal instruction approaches such as face-to-face and e-learning. This is an essential step in implementing personalized learning goals. (C)(2)(a)(i); (C)(2)(a)(iv); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• Teachers will have access to assessment tools such as an item bank on a Moodle platform with defined learning targets for each unit of instruction. Assessments can be created quickly and administered frequently. The focus will be on formative assessment. (Applicant provides a convincing example of data-driven instruction at the primary school level.) This is an essential step in implementing personalized learning goals. (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• District emphasizes the importance of its proposal in increasing the effectiveness of teaching and school performance and the positive contribution anticipated for the current teacher and principal evaluation system. The latter will be impacted through the immediate availability of new levels of data about individual student performance.(C)(2)(a)(iv); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• Teachers and principals will be able to track student progress in real time. Performance data can be consolidated at the classroom level. Effective teaching practices will be more easily identified. These capabilities are particularly important for improving teaching and learning in underperforming schools since data feedback will be on a fast track as opposed to forcing schools to wait for an annual progress report. (C)(2)(a)(iv); (C)(2)(b)(i); (C)(2)(b)(iii); (C)(2)(c)(i); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

• Applicant has a high-quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects (such as mathematics and science). Program's primary emphasis is on STEM education, grades K-5 and includes ALL K-5 schools in district. (C)(2)(a)(ii); C)(2)(b)(ii); (C)(2)(c)(ii)

Total	**210**	**208**